

Counselor's Corner: December 2021 – Tis the Season to... set boundaries

The tree is up, lights are twinkling, and stockings are hung. Now, you can sit and relax by the fire with a hot cup of cocoa. WAIT – no you can't! There's too much to do! Holiday parties, shopping, baking, decorating, family visits, cleaning, entertaining, volunteering, caroling, and the list goes on and on. This is such a busy time of year. That's why it's so important to establish and honor healthy boundaries for your own mental health and wellbeing.

You may be wondering "what exactly is a healthy boundary". It's a way to prioritize your own needs. A boundary is a guideline that establishes clear and reasonable limits. Mental health boundaries often focus on your physical, mental, and spiritual health. Allow me to provide some examples.

1. Prioritize healthy physical habits, like getting enough sleep, exercise, and nutrition
2. Say YES because you want to – not because you feel obligated or just to please others
3. Say NO without guilt. It's really ok to politely decline
4. Clearly state your needs and wants – don't assume anyone can read your mind
5. Choose who you spend your valuable time with
6. Ask for help and delegate – you don't have to do it all yourself
7. Let go of the things that are not within your control
8. Accept and honor other people's boundaries

If setting boundaries is a new concept for you, I would encourage you to pay attention to your emotions, energy, and physical reactions. Do you feel happy, and energized by specific holiday activities, or are they stressful, and depleting your energy? Noticing this will help you determine where you might need to implement some boundaries.

Creating boundaries is NOT selfish. It's strategic and thoughtful. Boundaries afford us the physical and emotional ability to show up at our best for those around us. Your friends, family, and loved ones will appreciate it and learn from your example.

Establishing and sticking to boundaries can help you manage your mental health and avoid burnout. Go ahead, give it a try. Wishing you a holiday season filled with joy!

